

Message Text

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61

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04

RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 AID-20 SY-03 USSS-00 DRC-01

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FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2323

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 1769

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, GT

SUBJECT: OUTSPOKEN JOURNALIST ASSASSINATED

1. RADIO NEWS COMMENTATOR MARIO MONTERROSO ARMAS WAS ASSASSINATED ABOUT 2000 HOURS MARCH 27 AS HE LEFT THE DOWNTOWN OFFICE OF THE VOZ DE LAS AMERICAS RADIO STATION. WITNESSES TOLD PRESS THAT ASSASSINS WERE FOUR YOUNG MEN DRESSED LIKE CAMPESINOS. POLICE CHASED ASSAILANTS GET-AWAY CAR SEVERAL BLOCKS BEFORE LOSING IT IN TRAFFIC.

2. BEFORE AND AFTER MARCH 3 ALECTIONS, MONTERROSA, 37, HAD BEEN AMONG MOST VIRULENT CRITICS OF GOG, MLN, AND ARANA FAMILY. HIS CAUSTIC COMMENTARIES HELPED PROVOKE BRIEF GOVERNMENT CLOSING OF VOZ DE LAS AMERICAS STATION. ALTHOUGH NEPHEW OF RIGHTIST PRESIDENT CASTILLO ARMAS, MONTERROSO WAS MEMBER OF DISSIDENT DCG GROUP, FLOR, AND HAD CAMPAIGNED ACTIVELY FOR MAYORAL CANDICAY OF FURD SECRETARY-GENERAL LEONEL PONCIANO. GOG WAS KNOWN TO BE ANGERED BY BLUNTNESS OF MONTERROSO'S CRITICISMS AND SOME RECENT BROADCASTS HAD BEEN NEARLY INAUDIBLE DUE TO APPARENT JAMMING. FURD LEADER COLOM ARGUETA COMMENTED TO US ON NIGHT OF ASSASSINATION THAT IN HIS JUDGMENT MONTERROSA HAD BEEN "TOO VIOLENT" IN HIS ATTACKS
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ON GOG.

3. ASSASSINATION HAS BEEN PUBLICLY CONDEMNED BY OPPOSITION FRONT, AND BY ASSOCIATION OF GUATEMALAN JOURNALISTS (APG) IN STATEMENTS WHICH OBLIQUELY IMPLY GOG RESPONSIBILITY. COLOM ARGUETA OPINED TO US THAT KILLING WAS WORK OF THE PRESIDENT'S SON, ROBERTO "TITO" ARANA, OR OF CONGRESSIONAL SECURITY FORCE. GOG COMMUNIQUE PLACED BLAME ON ELEMENTS WHICH SEEK TO "CREATE DISCONTENT AND SABOTAGE THE PEACEFUL TRANSFER OF POWER. THE STATEMENT ALSO ADDED OMINOUSLY THAT "SUCH ASSASSINATION FORM PART OF THE PROSELYTING TACTIC WHICH IS BEING USED TO INCITE SUBVERSION OF THE PUBLIC ORDER. THE GUATEMALAN PEOPLE HAVE VERIFIED THE EXCESSES TO WHICH SOME OPPOSITION LEADERS ARE GOING IN PUBLISHING SEDITIOUS MANIFESTOS WHICH REPRESENT A PROVOCATION TO THE AUTHORITIES AND THE LAWS."
MELOY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ASSASSINATION, JOURNALISTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 MAR 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974GUATEM01769
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740068-0341
From: GUATEMALA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t1974038/aaaaahka.tel
Line Count: 78
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 SEP 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <16 SEP 2002 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <08 JAN 2003 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: OUTSPOKEN JOURNALIST ASSASSINATED
TAGS: PINT, GT, (MONTERROSO ARMAS, MARIO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005